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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Thanksgiving is one of the better holidays. It's a holiday that should be celebrated every single day. It may be an American traditional holiday but the philosophy behind it is something that the international community should be reminded. It is a time for family and friends to get together in a variety of ways: turkey dinner, football games, a gathering of family, and a number of other ways. It's a time for giving thanks for what we have, and a time for helping those who are not as fortunate. And in a time where there are hostilities in the world, it's a time for being grateful to those who are out there protecting us and allowing us to live our lives in relatively peaceful conditions.

Knowing Joe, he'll agree with me that now, more than ever, is the time to do something for someone else. A donation of food or money, a kind word to someone who could really use it, or whatever - something to help make someone else's life just a little bit better than it was prior to your doing so. It's the little things that occasionally make things better for someone else.

I hope you all had a terrific holiday, and that you're finally starting to be able to find your "normal" belt notch! We ate at my in-laws, so I won't be doing any leftovers this year! I guess the only way I'll get any is to buy a turkey for ourselves and enjoy!

It should be a quiet weekend around here for a change. The leaves are essentially gone. The weather has been cooperative this year, and the new lawn vac made the job a lot easier! I may as well get the snow thrower put together and tested before the inevitable snow hits. Well, it's been a short week, so let's move along in time to enjoy some remnants of yesterday's feast. Hey, at least I bought a nice holiday pie to provide me with some after-Thanksgiving enjoyment!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Boy, am I stuffed. I love turkey! To me there is nothing like a turkey dinner with all the trimmings.

I received a "Thanksgiving bonus" this year and, as I do most years, I donated the money to a local food-share/shelter organization. But this year, my wife received a turkey from her employer. We also donated that one.

This year has been tough on many people. Most of them are just like you and I. I'm not getting on a soapbox and preaching, but I think that, while we are taking stock of the things that we have been blessed with, we should also take stock of what we can do to help others. No, donating a couple of bucks and a turkey won't change the world, and it probably won't even change lives. But enough little things can add up to make a difference. There are all kinds of ways to help. It doesn't have to be food or money. A kind word or an understanding smile is often just as welcomed.

Well, let's get on with the news and hints and tips and stuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Francisco Fernandez asks about hooking up a hard drive:

"Some years in the past I tried to install a Quantum Fireball 850 MB to replace an internal 48 MB HD in my Mega STE.
The software which I used to partition the disk and install the driver was Atari's own AHDI utilities.

I think I tried v4.x and v5.x. None of them recognized the drive, so I had to purchase an ICD Link II external adapter and an SCSI case.
Now I wonder if it was an issue of the driver software and HDDRIVER could have done the job. Perhaps Atari software was restricted to "official units".

Is there rally a hardware limitation with bundled internal adapter?.
I'd rather prefer to have the unit internally."

Steve Sweet tells Francisco:

"I had an 850M Quantum in my MegaSTE for some while.

I couldn't do this step with AHDI, I used ICD, that was successful.

It would have worked with the Atari adaptor.

I couldn't format and partition, I got the complaint that wincap wasn't up to the job in some way.

The only hardware limitation as far as parity is concerned, and you could have turned that off with the Quantum.

You can [place the unit internally], mine was there up until the point it died, and now I have a 4.5Gig seagate internal with a Link 97."

Francisco tells Steve:

"Thanks for exposing your experience. Now I see that it is possible. Not only parity, but also leaving the drive unterminated (and ID 0) was required, as I read in some other postings about the same questions."

Dr. Uwe Seimet tells Francisco:

"Most Quantum Fireballs require initiator identification, which is a feature that is only provided by the LINK96 and LINK97 adapters.

If the drive does not work with another ID than 0, HDDRIVER is not correctly configured. Please refer to the manual for details."

Edward Baiz asks about CD recording/burning:

"I was wondering if anyone has gotten one of the newer Sony SCSI CDRW drives to work on an Atari computer. I picked one up recently and tried to install it in my Hades. HDDriver and the installation program for Extendos recognize the drive perfectly. However, when I try to boot up the Extendos driver, it does not work. Strangely enough, after the attempted Extendos boot-up, the drive loses it’s power. The only way to get it back is to turn of the computer and re-boot. Any ideas?? Should I try one of the other drives out or just call it quits?"

Peter Schneider tells Edward:

"For just reading you’ll need a METADOS installation (e.g. SPIN!...).

For writing METADOS is _not_ necessary! You just run SCSI driver stand-alone or as built-in to e.g. recent HDDRIVER versions. And EXTENDOS or CDRECORDER afterwards, of course.

Does any different drive behave the same way? I hope you do not send an unwanted ’goto bed’ command to your drive!

I suppose your SCSI chain is made up the correct manner and perfectly terminated!"

Hallvard Tangeraas asks about registering a particular program:

"Almost 3 weeks ago I went to the DoIt website (http://www.doitarchive.de), downloaded the "DoIt ST" zip file and entered my details for registering it (which is free, so I guess the author just wants to keep track of how many people download it), but I still haven’t received the password, even after mailing the author several times.

So I’m wondering if it usually takes this long? Anyone else downloaded and registered any of the "DoIt" files?"

Adam Klobukowski tells Hallvard:

"The DoIT archives author can be meet on irc often on #atariscne."

David Wade tells Hallvard:

"I think I did [register] same about the same time. Password arrived within 2 days..."

Michael Warneke asks about using a PC mouse on an Atari ST:

"Is it possible to connect a normal serial PC-mouse to the ATARI 1040 STF?

My original mouse is gone. I heard from a hardware solution, but i like to go on first with a software solution.

Somebody know a software tool to solve my problem? Where can I find this tool?"

Martin Byttebier tells Michael:

"You can find the soft on the Belgian ftp-server
ftp://chapelie.rma.ac.be/atari/utilities/
genmouse.lzh
mouse26beta.lzh
mouse26s.lzh (sources of mouse26beta)

It's possible you need both genmouse and mouse26beta.lzh. The docs are in English/German."

'Don' asks about upgrading his Mega's TOS version:

"I have a Mega ST4 that had TOS 1.00 on two chips. I replaced it with Mega TOS 1.02 6 chips. I jumped W2 1-2 and W3 1-2 and jumped W4. And also cut a pin un the U12 chip. And now the Mega wont boot. Am I missing something else? There is NO Blitter installed. The chips worked in a 1040STF without any problems."

Alexander Holland tells Don:

"The manual say's....

ROM	W2	W3	W4	U12
256k	1-2	1-2	Jumper	No Use
1Mx2	2-3	2-3	Non	Use
1Mx6	2-3	2-3	Jumper	No Use

So it appears you have the CORRECT settings.

[Are] you sure it's not a higher TOS and you should have used the LAST setting (1M*6)?

Or you could get a TOS2.06 on two chips, which is the middle setting. You can source the chips for (max) 2.99 each."

Don replies to Alex:

"I'm sure its not a higher TOS. I've also tried a 6 chip 1.0 and it's still the same. The eproms are 27c256 so the 256k setting should be working. I also have a set of TOS 1.62 but the PROMs have more pins so that option is out."

Henk Robbers posts this notice about XaAES:

"There is a new version of XaAES available on my homepage (http://xaaes.atari.org).

The amount of changes (and fixes) is substantial."
You can read them in the 'last changes summary'"

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - GameCube Launched!
Sega Slashes Dreamcast Price!
Game Over For Bleem!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

GameCube Launch Nets Nintendo $100 Million in Sales

Nintendo Co. Ltd., which launched its GameCube video game console on Sunday in the United States, sold about $100 million of the next-generation machines and related merchandise on the first day, a Nintendo spokeswoman said on Monday.

Nintendo of America spokeswoman Perrin Kaplan said the estimated number of new games bought together with each new console was somewhere between two and three. Games sell for $49.99 each.

Nintendo shipped 700,000 units of the $199-console for the launch, but Kaplan could not say how many units were sold on the first day.

''It's over what we think Microsoft's allocation was," she said, referring to Microsoft Corp.'s launch-day quantities of its new Xbox game console, which debuted on Thursday.

Microsoft's $299 console is pitched to older gamers than Nintendo's offering, whose appeal lies largely among children ages six to 14.

Nintendo's claim for weekend GameCube sales put the game ahead of blockbuster movie ''Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," which posted a record, three-day opening weekend box office of just over $90 million.

''Harry Potter's such a hot thing it's just kind of nice to be up there with that," Kaplan said.

Nintendo, which launched the GameCube in Japan in September, plans to ship around 100,000 units per week to U.S. retail stores, Kaplan said, through the end of the year. At that pace, the total shipments for the year would be about 1.2 million units, slightly ahead of Nintendo's 1.1 million forecast.

The top-selling game for the console, Kaplan said, was "Luigi's Mansion," a Nintendo-publisher title, followed by Lucas Arts' ''Star Wars: Rogue Squadron 2" and Nintendo's ''Wave Race: Blue Storm."

For the first nine months of the year, Nintendo had five of the top-10 selling video games, according to statistics released by The NPD Group on Monday.

The GameCube and Xbox compete with Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 2, which was released in Nov. 2000 and which is expected to be the best-selling platform by a wide margin this holiday season. Konami Co. Ltd.'s ''Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty," the most anticipated PS2 game this year, was also released last week.

NPD predicted that among the three consoles, this year would be the best ever for the U.S. video game industry, surpassing 1999's record $6.1 billion.

Sega Cuts Prices To Unload Dreamcasts

Sega of America announced Wednesday that it is dropping the price of its discontinued Dreamcast video game console to $49.95--around the price of a single game for consoles from Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo.

Sega decided to exit the hardware business early in 2001 amid a cash crunch that left it unable to continue subsidizing the cost of manufacturing its consoles.

The company has refocused on game software, producing titles for Microsoft's Xbox, Sony's PlayStation 2 and Nintendo's GameCube.

Sega had already twice trimmed the price of the Dreamcast system, which originally sold for $199.

Sega spokeswoman Gwen Marker said the company expects to have all the remaining 270,000 Dreamcast consoles in stores this weekend. "At our present sales rates, that means retailers will run out around mid-December," she said.

The Dreamcast has a software catalog of about 200 games, although only a handful of new titles are planned for the console.

Company That Made PlayStation Emulator Shuts Down

A company that made software allowing consumers to play video games meant for the Sony Corp. PlayStation on their PCs and other consoles has shut down after protracted legal battles, it said.

Bleem Inc., a Los Angeles-based company that made what is called "emulator" software, replaced the front page of its Web site over the weekend with a graphic depicting a tombstone in a grassy field. The stone says, ‘‘Bleem! April 1999 -- November 2001." The title of the page was also changed to ‘‘Game Over."

The Web site also shows ‘‘Sonic the Hedgehog," the most famous character created by Sega Corp. for its now discontinued line of consoles, plucking petals from a flower and crying.

A call to Bleem was not returned. An e-mail to Bleem executives was answered with an auto-reply that said, ‘‘Thanks for emailing Bleem!, but we’re history. Vapor. Kaput. Splitsville. Extinct. Gone the way of the Dodo. In a word, Dead."

A Sony spokesman said he was not aware of the shutdown and could not immediately comment.

Sony first sued Bleem over its products in May 2000. Bleem countersued, claiming Sony was exercising an illegal monopoly over the video game industry.

Bleem’s most recent product, Bleemcast, allows PSX games to be played on Sega’s Dreamcast console. Users burn the Bleemcast code onto a CD and then put the CD into the Dreamcast and turn the console on, which loads the code into memory. This tricks PSX games into thinking they are on their native platform.

Bleem sold individual discs for $5.99 each that were compatible with specific games and would let them work on the Dreamcast. The company also had plans for $19.99 ‘‘bleempaks" that would be compatible with multiple games.

The email from Bleem said Bleemcast was still being sold at Electronics Boutique, a major game retail chain. EB’s Web site lists only one Bleem product, the Bleemcast disc for the Sony game ‘‘Gran Turismo 2."

Bleem was one of two companies to make a PlayStation emulator. The other one, Connectix, licensed its technology to Sony in March and ceased distribution of its product in June.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Reaches Private Settlement

Microsoft said on Tuesday it had reached a deal to settle a raft of private antitrust cases that would require the company to spend over a $1 billion to put software and computers into some of the poorest U.S. schools.

If approved, the deal would close another chapter in the software giant's legal saga, while aiding Microsoft make further inroads into the nation's schools, which once were dominated rival Apple Computer Inc.

''It is a settlement that avoids long and costly litigation for the company and at the same time ... really makes a difference in the lives of millions of school children in some of the most economically disadvantaged schools in the country," Microsoft Chief Executive Officer Steve Ballmer told reporters on a conference call.

The five-year program would settle class action claims that Microsoft abused its monopoly over personal computer operating systems and overcharged millions of people for software.

Microsoft said it would file the settlement agreement in federal court in Baltimore later on Tuesday and take a $550 million charge before taxes against earnings in the current fiscal quarter if the pact is approved by the court.

The software giant, which agreed earlier this month to settle its separate 3-year-old case with the Justice Department, would assist over 12,500 schools serving nearly seven million children under the settlement of the private suits.

But some class action attorneys in California are opposing the deal, arguing it does not adequately reimburse consumers in that state, according to sources.

Also, the legal cloud hanging over Microsoft will not evaporate completely since nine states are still pursuing tougher sanctions against the company for past antitrust violations and there is the specter of new legal challenges based on the new Windows XP operating system.

As part of the settlement, Microsoft said it would establish a foundation with $150 million in seed money to make grants to local community organizations and foundations to buy computers and software, regardless of the manufacturer.

It also said it would match up to another $100 million in donations. Another $160 million will be made available for technology support programs and $90 million over five years for training to integrate technology into school curriculum.

Red Hat Inc., the maker of the Linux operating system that competes against Microsoft, proposed on its own offering every school district in the country its own open- source software free of charge, while encouraging Microsoft to spend its money on buying more hardware for the schools.

''We do not think that the remedy should be a mechanism by which Microsoft can further extend its monopoly," Matthew Szulik, chief executive of Red Hat said in a statement. ''By providing schools with a software choice, Red Hat will enable Microsoft to provide many more computers to these schools."

One source said the proposed settlement came from one of the lead plaintiffs' lawyers in the case, who concluded that each of the 65 million computer buyers represented would receive as little as $10 in a settlement or court victory.

''This is an innovative and visionary settlement that resolves these

complex lawsuits by providing great benefits to public schools," said Michael Hausfeld of Cohen, Milstein, Hausfeld & Toll, one of the lead plaintiffs' lawyers.

Still, the deal gives Microsoft a big public relations boost while helping to promote its software in primary and secondary schools that have been dominated by Apple. Apple could not be reached immediately for comment.

Asked if Microsoft would use the settlement to capture a greater share of the educational software market from Apple, Microsoft's Ballmer noted the money can be used to buy any kind of software, not just Microsoft's.

''So I don't view it as some big thing about market share," Ballmer said.

The giveaways would go to any school with at least 70 percent of its children on subsidized school lunch programs, roughly 14 percent of the nation's schools.

Microsoft said it would provide additional detail on the financial impact of the proposal later in the week. If the deal is approved by U.S. District Court Judge J. Frederick Motz, about 100 private antitrust class action claims will be dropped.

Even more importantly, settlement of the private claims could increase pressure on the remaining state attorneys general who are still pursuing Microsoft in the government case to settle as well, another source said.

On Nov. 2 the company reached a settlement with the U.S. Justice Department designed to restore competition in the personal computer software market. Nine of the 18 states involved in the case joined that pact within days.

A federal appeals court in June upheld a lower court ruling that the company used illegal tactics to maintain its Windows personal computer operating system monopoly.

With the private settlement, Microsoft can now portray the remaining states in the government case as isolated hold-outs, one source said.

Microsoft Deal May Core Apple in Schools

A proposed settlement agreement in a series of antitrust suits may not only give Microsoft a fairly inexpensive legal resolution, it may also help the company and its PC allies further erode Apple Computer's position in education.

Under a settlement proposal in a series of private antitrust lawsuits announced Tuesday, Microsoft agreed to donate approximately $500 million to help bring technology to some of the nation's most disadvantaged schools. The deal will also allow these schools to obtain a virtually unlimited supply of Microsoft software for the next five years.

Those terms, say analysts, could hurt Apple and other software providers. Historically, education has been one of Apple's primary markets. And although the company has slipped to No. 2 in kindergarten through grade 12--behind Dell--it still has a larger installed base than anyone else.

Free software, though, is hard to pass up. Apple, as well as Linux

companies and other educational software developers, could find themselves out in the cold in school districts flush with new Microsoft products.

Microsoft could wind up "undercutting everyone in the education market," Gerard Klauer Mattison analyst David Bailey said. The best-case scenario for Apple would be that Microsoft increases the overall level of PCs in schools without directly harming a company like Apple, he said.

Linux specialist Red Hat Software tried to counter Microsoft’s move soon after the settlement was announced. The company said it would provide its software to every U.S. school district and encouraged Microsoft to convert the software component of the deal to increased hardware donations, which costs the company little.

"While we applaud Microsoft for raising the idea of helping poorer schools as part of the penalty phase of their conviction for monopolistic practices, we do not think that the remedy should be a mechanism by which Microsoft can further extend its monopoly," Red Hat CEO Matthew Szulik said in a statement.

An Apple spokeswoman declined to comment on the issue.

The potential pain for Apple comes in the unique settlement terms. Under the deal, Microsoft will grant approximately $500 million to help underprivileged schools create self-sustaining technology programs. Of that, $90 million will go to teacher training, while $160 million will go to technical support. Microsoft will also match contributions from other donors.

Additionally, Microsoft will donate approximately 1 million refurbished PCs to these schools and provide them with complimentary Microsoft software.

The donations would go to public elementary and secondary schools, at which 70 percent of students are eligible for federal meal assistance, or approximately 14 percent of the nation’s schools, according to Microsoft. Approximately 12,500 schools, representing 7 million students and 400,000 teachers, would be eligible to participate in the program.

With these donations, Apple equipment becomes far less attractive to cash-strapped districts. Even if the grant funds are used to buy Apple equipment, a district would have to pass up opportunities for free software.

In recent years, Apple has seen its share of the market decline because of price competition. Dell is now No. 1 in the education market, with 37 percent of new elementary and high school sales in the second quarter, according to IDC. Apple came in second, with 23 percent.

Familiarizing students with Microsoft technology could also make loyal customers out of today’s students. Developing familiarity, in fact, was the basis for Apple’s push into education back in the 1980s. The theory was that students would stick with the technology they understood best. While there may be some truth to this, it hasn’t completely panned out in the numbers. Apple’s share of the PC market is below 5 percent, far below its share in education.

Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer denied the proposed settlement was an attempt to boost the company’s share of the education market. "The benefits we provide can be used for PCs or Macintoshes," he said. "It can be used for

PC software or Macintosh software. Certainly, the money can be used for non-Microsoft software, so I don’t view it as some big thing about market share."

Microsoft also produces applications for Apple computers, pointed out IDC analyst Roger Kay.

Although the settlement terms will likely help Microsoft’s position in education, more tangible benefits come from the relatively light terms. The company is effectively making a $500 million charitable donation and giving away its own software to settle a case where the liability could have stretched into far higher figures.

The case in some ways is being settled for pennies on the dollar, according to Bob Lande, an antitrust professor with University of Baltimore School of Law.

The company will also likely get positive public relations messages out with the deal, said Gartner Dataquest analyst Michael Silver. "This gets Microsoft out of all these lawsuits in one fell swoop," Silver said. "It’s a penalty, but it makes Microsoft look good and gives schools PCs, and in so doing would give Microsoft an even larger installed base than they already have."

Hewlett Heir Steps Up Attack on HP-Compaq Merger

The son of Hewlett-Packard co-founder William Hewlett stepped up his offensive against the proposed Compaq merger, preparing a detailed, 70-page criticism for the trustees of his father’s trust. The criticism says that the merger would weaken HP’s strengths while failing to reinforce its weaknesses.

In a presentation prepared for the Trustees of the William R. Hewlett Revocable Trust, Walter R. Hewlett, an HP director, said the merger would fail to make HP stronger in the enterprise, while increasing exposure in the PC market, where it’s difficult to make money.

The combined companies will be focused too strongly in the midrange, weak when compared with Dell on the low end and Sun and IBM at the high end. These are the same problems the companies face separately, notes the statement, which was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission on Friday.

Hewlett also filed a statement saying he plans to solicit proxies from HP stockholders to vote against the merger.

The trust is a significant shareholder in HP. Together, the trust and other Hewlett heirs own five percent of HP stock. The Hewlett family said in a statement earlier this month that the family and Trust are decided against the merger, while the Hewlett Foundation "has reached a preliminary conclusion" to vote against it.

David Packard, son of the HP co-founder with the same name, also came out in opposition to the merger early this month, although he said he does not speak for other Packard heirs. The Packard heirs owns more than 10 percent of HP stock.

HP and Compaq issued their own, detailed rationale for the merger in a 120-page proxy statement filed with the SEC Thursday.

The merger would shift business focus to PCs, "contrary to [the] professed strategy of migrating to higher margin, less commodity-like businesses," according to Hewlett's statement.

HP stockholders would also see their interest in HP's lucrative imaging and printing business diluted by the influx of new stockholders from the Compaq position, the statement says.

"[The] combined entity remains 'stuck in the middle' in servers-behind Dell at the low and Sun and IBM at the high end," according to Hewlett's statement.

Likewise, services will be "heavily weighted to lower margin support, not outsourcing and consulting," the statement says.

Integration will be problematic. There's "no precedent for success in big technology transactions. Most acquisitions fail, particularly when market reaction is negative," as it has been in the HP-Compaq merger. Integration difficulties are "obvious," and the cultures will be difficult to mesh, according to the statement.

Major mergers in the technology industry have a history of failure, the statement notes, including AT&T's acquisition of NCR in 1991, Burroughs's acquisition of Sperry in 1986, HP's acquisition of Apollo Computer in 1989, HP's acquisition of Verifone in 1997, and Compaq's acquisition of Digital Equipment in 1998.

Compaq won't solve HP's problems with shrinking margins and commoditization of the PC business, and weakness in the direct channel when compared with Dell, because Compaq has the same problems, Hewlett said. Compaq's operating margins in its PC business were lower than HP's.

Likewise, in the enterprise, Compaq and Hewlett-Packard are both losing server market share. Compaq and HP's combined $1.5 billion revenue lead over IBM in the second quarter of 2000 had decreased to $400 million a year later, according to the Hewlett statement.

"Compaq's strongest position is in the less attractive entry server market," the statement says, referring to Compaq's ProLiant Intel-architecture servers. "Compaq has significant lead in the entry-level server market, where HP has been losing share quickly." Dell is driving prices down for low-end servers, causing Compaq's margins to decline. Some 60 percent of Compaq's total enterprise computing revenue comes from Intel-architecture servers.

HP can boost its presence in midrange and high-end markets by itself, without the Compaq acquisition. HP did 4-1/2 times Compaq's volume in high-end Unix, and 1.6 times Compaq's total revenue for midrange and high-end systems in the second quarter of this year. HP is fastest-growing in the market for systems priced at $1 million or more. "While Compaq brings strong Windows technology, HP can address this emerging market segment through R&D," the Hewlett statement says.

While Compaq's storage is strong, external storage would account for only 3.7 percent of the combined company's revenues, the Hewlett statement says.

And Compaq doesn't help HP provide stronger services. "Compaq and HP

services combined look like Compaq and HP alone," the Hewlett statement says. Consulting and systems integration are higher-margin, and can drive product sales. "Outsourcing requires a high initial investment, but can provide stable, countercyclical revenue streams," the statement says. While hardware support is stable, it only offers a low growth and margin.

Compaq failed to fulfill the promise of the service unit it acquired when it acquired Digital, according to the Hewlett statement.

Extended Internet Tax Ban Awaits Bush Signing

President Bush is expected to sign at any time a two-year extension of the ban on Internet taxes that the U.S. Senate approved on Thursday.

The Internet tax three-year moratorium expired last month, as Congress turned its attention to domestic security and economic stimulus in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The U.S. House of Representatives previously passed the simple extension.

The Internet Non-Discrimination Act bans access and other multiple and discriminatory online taxes for another two years. It will expire Nov. 1, 2003.

The stopgap measure does not address efforts by states to simplify their tax codes in return for being able to collect sales tax on e-commerce in the future. Many governors want the authority to be able to collect taxes on online sales similar to those for offline purchases. States are concerned that rising e-commerce will erode their tax base to pay for schools and emergency services. But Internet retailers say it is too difficult to set up collections for 7,000 taxing districts.

A 1992 Supreme Court decision blocks states from collecting taxes from catalog, telephone or online sales unless the retailer has a physical presence in the state.

Online retailers and Internet companies say taxes over the Internet should be banned outright to allow cyber commerce to grow unfettered.

Office v. X Arrives

Microsoft’s Macintosh Business Unit officially announced the release of Office v. X, the much-anticipated suite of applications built for Mac OS X. Office v. X includes Entourage X, Word X, Excel X and PowerPoint X, as well as many extras like Windows Media Player X and an Import Mail to help users transition from Apple’s built-in Mail application.

"We’re delighted to bring our award-winning set of productivity tools to Mac OS X," said Kevin Browne, general manager of the Macintosh Business Unit at Microsoft Corp. "Office v. X delivers on the promise of Mac OS X by taking full advantage of the new operating system, and by adding many new and improved features as well. When our customers pick up their copy of Office v. X this week, they will finally be able to work full time in Mac OS X."

Office v. X takes advantage of many of the built-in technologies of Mac OS X like the Aqua interface, Sheets and the Quartz graphics engine. Sheets ha! ve replaced select dialog boxes and alerts in Office v. X, enabling users to multitask within or between applications. When a user clicks to save a Word document, for instance, a Sheet appears in place of a dialog box. The user can choose to open a different Word document or continue working in another application, without having to complete the save first.

Quartz graphics technology in Office v. X makes it possible to create graphically rich documents. It allows users to add anti-aliased lines and shapes to give documents a smooth and finished appearance. Quartz also enables true transparency, so shapes, objects and pictures can be layered to reveal items behind them.

"Microsoft has created the new benchmark Mac OS X application -- Office v. X -- and Mac users are going to be thrilled with it," said Apple CEO Steve Jobs. "Now users of Mac OS X can seamlessly exchange documents with users running Office on Windows."

Office v. X will be availab! le as an upgrade for an estimated retail price of US$299 and as! a standard version for $499. Until January 18, 2002, users of Office 2001 for Mac, Word 2001 for Mac, Excel 2001 for Mac, PowerPoint 2001, Word + Entourage Special Edition (SE) can upgrade for $149 directly from Microsoft. Between now and Dec. 31, Microsoft is offering a Technology Guarantee to customers who have acquired Office 2001 for Mac or an individual application such as Word 2001 for Mac. The Technology Guarantee makes these customers eligible for a free copy of Office v. X for Mac. For details and to download the coupon for the Technology Guarantee, customers can visit the MacBU Web site or their nearest reseller.

Mac Office-X

Apple’s new operating system, Mac OS X, is a work of art.

It’s fast, and a Unix base provides stability. But the lack of compatible software long prevented Apple from winning converts from the Windows-based PC world - and even thwarted Mac users who wanted to upgrade from Mac OS 9.

Now, a new office productivity suite makes the strongest case yet for a switch. And it’s from Microsoft Corp.

Making good on a promise that came with a $150 million investment in Apple five years ago, Microsoft has released Office X, the latest version of its ubiquitous office suite.

It contains the familiar names from earlier versions: Word for word processing, Excel for spreadsheets and PowerPoint for presentations. It also has an e-mail and organizer program dubbed Entourage.

Fundamentally, the features differ little from Office XP for Windows or earlier Mac operating systems. But this suite is not backward compatible. It only runs on Apple’s new operating system.

That alone will score points for the Mac faithful who ran the last version of Office in Mac OS X’s slow compatibility mode.

In the Microsoft tradition, the suite carries a high price: $499 for a

complete copy or $299 for an upgrade. Apple offers an alternative for starving students, the $79 AppleWorks suite.

The biggest change in Office X is the look.

Microsoft developers captured the feel of Apple’s new operating system and its ‘‘Aqua" interface, from ever-so-slightly transparent menus to 700 crisp, new icons. Dialogue box buttons look like jelly beans.

Unlike older Office versions for Macs or PCs, the charts and graphics also can be made semitransparent. Documents appear professionally produced.

Office X’s programs have inherited OS X’s stability. During my tests, there were no unexpected freezes or crashes.

Most dialogue boxes no longer prevent the rest of the program from being used until a choice is made. Other files can be opened while the dialogue box patiently awaits input.

A context-sensitive palette also makes finding features easier - mirroring functions in Adobe and Macromedia programs. The palette eliminates the need to browse through menus or interpret arcane toolbar icons.

Better yet, the Microsoft Mac team did not include the underhanded activation scheme found in Office XP and Windows XP, where users must send information back to Microsoft or face deactivation of their software.

Office X also does not include Smart Tags, an Office XP feature that links text in one document to information in others or on the Internet.

Documents produced in Office X can be shared with Windows PCs and older Macs. And Apple wisely improved the Mac’s ability to communicate on a Windows network.

I merged data from an Excel worksheet into a form letter in Word. It worked flawlessly - even after I transferred everything back to my Windows computer.

Entourage, Office’s e-mail and personal organizer, underwent the greatest number of changes since Mac Office 2001. Its various features - whether a list of tasks, e-mails, calendar settings, notes or address books - are easily accessible from the main page.

A number of Word-like editing features are available, including identifying misspelled words and multiple undo.

There are some limitations, including the lack of support for synching with a Palm handheld computer. It also lacks some of Outlook 2001’s groupware features popular with businesses.

A couple applications from the PC version are missing from the Mac suite, including the relational database program Access and the Web site editor FrontPage. Office X’s Excel can import data from the popular non-Microsoft database program Filemaker Pro.

Another minor annoyance is the ugly ‘‘office assistant" that popped on the screen when I sought online help. It doesn’t fit into the stylish environment, though it’s not as annoying as the animated paper clip in some Windows versions.

Examining Netscape 6.2

As Microsoft’s Internet Explorer continues its march to Internet world domination, those determined to resist are battling on bravely.

One of these is Netscape, and if you’ve shaken an "I’ll-pick-my-own-browser!" fist toward Redmond, Wash., in the past, you might want to take a look. Not that a part of behemoth AOL-Time Warner is exactly an embattled band of partisans, but as in any war, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

A look at Netscape 6.0 about a year ago resulted in a decision to stay with Netscape 4.7 - and unless your system meets the minimum requirements for 6.2, that might be your only option. Besides, 6.0 seemed too cute by half, reminding me of a 5-year-old in her first party dress.

Things have gotten better.

The default installation on a recently downloaded copy did not come up with the sidebar that annoyed in 6.0, but with a plain, blank screen. (If you liked the sidebar, it’s an option you can select, and if you want netscape.com to be your home page, they’ll make it easy, but it’s not required.)

Netscape 6.2 seems speedier than 4.7. And while Windows ME occasionally whined about the latest version of Netscape 4.7 and shut it down, a week of running 6.2 produced not an incident. (Occasionally shutting down Navigator 6.2 is probably under development for the next Windows ME update.)

Bookmarks still are displayed in a single, scrolling column, instead of the multiple columns of 4.7, which is an annoyance if you have many bookmarks and are too lazy to organize them into folders.

As always, you gotta like the price - a free download from netscape.com. Or, if you want it on a CD-ROM, they’ll do it for $6.95 shipping and handling and throw in 12 free issues of Time or Sports Illustrated. Can you say ‘‘co-marketing?"

Here are the minimum requirements for Netscape 6.2:

Windows, any operating system from Windows 95 through Windows XP. And at least a 233 megahertz Pentium and 64 megabytes of RAM, 26 megabytes of hard drive space.

Linux, Red Hat Linux 6.0, 6.1, 6.2, 7.0 with X11 R6. The hardware specs are the same as for Windows. Macintosh, OS 8.6, 8.6.1, 9x, OS X. Hardware, Power PC 604e 266 megahertz, G3, g4. Have 64 megabytes of RAM and 36 megabytes of hard drive space.

Are You Prepared for E-mail Overload?

If you struggle to keep up with today’s e-mail volumes, what will you do when you get ten times as many messages from a variety of devices that send you e-mail alerts?

If you struggle to keep up with today’s e-mail volumes, what will you do when you get ten times as many messages, when a variety of devices send you e-mail alerts and when corporate information systems bombard you with data that they ”know’ you are interested in?

That was the question posed by Bill French, chief ingenuity officer of collaboration software developer Starbase, at a seminar hosted by the Victorian branch of the Australian Computer Society. While he did not claim to have the answer to this problem, he did suggest some possible directions.

Part of the problem is that if you were going to design a system for business communication, e-mail as we know it today would not be the result. A checklist of required attributes would probably include security, integration with other knowledge processes, awareness of the user’s presence and location, device-independence, role-based as well as person-based facilities, and efficiency from the user’s perspective.
-E-mail is practically the opposite of what we would build,- French said.

On the subject of user efficiency, French pointed to the way that when you read an e-mail sent to you at multiple addresses (just to be sure it reaches you ASAP), it still shows up in all your other mailboxes. Giving a personal example about the need for location awareness, when he checked his e-mail that morning from his hotel room, the messages at the top of his inbox were administrative items that would only be relevant if he was back in his office in the US.

-We could never get away with this [inefficiency] in any other product development,- he said. E-mail -seems to be a choke point that needs to be eliminated.-

Business communications software needs to have some kind of ”understanding’ of the context of a message: who the individuals involved are and what they do, allowing it to categorize the message in some useful way. This would allow the message to be automatically typed (in the sense of data types rather than data entry), opening up the possibility of managing the information contained in the messages.

-We don’t have the time to categorize manually any more,- he said. We need to separate content from meaning, just as we have learned to separate data and presentation when building a Web site, French suggested, admitting that this requires -an attempt to form a theory of the corporate mind.-

Some software developers are already trying to retrofit some of these ideas to the existing e-mail infrastructure.

French demonstrated Enfish, a program that associates and indexes e-mails and attachments you have exchanged with other people, along with related news items, notes, Web-based information (including that made available through Web services and Web folders) and so on.

-There are some basic assumptions we can make that makes e-mail more productive,- he said. A simple example is the way people who all work for the same company usually all have e-mail addresses in that company’s domain.

California Court Sets Hearing on Russian Programmer

A federal court in California will hold a pretrial hearing on Monday for a Russian software programmer charged with violating a controversial new U.S. copyright law, prosecutors said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joe Sullivan declined to comment on whether there had been negotiations to settle the case against Dmitry Sklyarov over technology that allows electronic books to be copied and printed.

The case has prompted Russia to warn its computer experts about visiting the United States.

The court was to set a schedule for lawyers to file motions at the hearing in U.S. District Court in San Jose, California, on Monday, Sullivan said.

Sklyarov, 26, was the first person to be prosecuted under the U.S. Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which took effect last year.

He was charged with selling and conspiring to sell technology designed to circumvent the act, which bans the sale of technology that allows people to thwart copyright protections in computer and electronic programs.

Free-speech advocates have rallied around Sklyarov because they oppose the law as too broad, while many U.S. businesses support the legislation for extending copyright protection into cyberspace.

Sklyarov, who pleaded not guilty in August, wrote a program that allows people using Adobe Systems Inc. eBook Reader software to copy and print digital books, transfer them to other computers and have the computer read them aloud.

The trial in the case against Sklyarov and his employer, ElcomSoft Co. Ltd of Moscow, is expected to begin early next year, Sullivan said.

Sklyarov was arrested in July after giving a presentation on his software at the DefCon hacker convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, and then released 21 days later on $50,000 bail.

How Hack Attacks Are Getting Smarter, And Harder To Stop

Last month, without much fanfare, Carnegie Mellon University’s CERT Coordination Center released a white paper on current trends in denial-of-service (DoS) attacks. While much of the report merely chronicles the alerts and warnings the organization has published over the last two years, a few pages toward the end--where the authors point out new tactics taken by malicious users--are downright troubling.

For those of you who don’t know, a DoS attack is an event that prevents users from accessing a Web site. It is often the result of hundreds of computers overwhelming that site with bogus traffic.

The White Paper, written by CERT’s Kevin J. Houle and George M. Weaver, as well as Neil Long and Rob Thomas, found that the means necessary to enlist computers (commonly known as "zombies") in this sort of attack has changed. Whereas DoS attacks used to result from the manual insertion of code via a Trojan horse into the targeted computer, now they are the result of autonomous network worms.

The authors found that central source-based network worms like Lion, which transfer hostile code via http, ftp, or rpc directly to the infected computer from a central source, are on the decline. Meanwhile, two other types of worms are on the rise: back-chaining worms like Ramen, which infect computers by connecting to a central source, and then transferring the DoS tools to the target systems; and the more sinister autonomous worms like Code Red, which pass the DoS code directly from victim to victim, allowing much faster infection and less opportunity for detection.

The authors also noted that the zombies involved in recent attacks were less likely to be Unix or Linux machines. Malicious users now favor Windows-based machines, which are co-opted via blind targeting, when malicious users randomly attack all systems running an OS such as Windows, or selective targeting, when malicious users choose to attack a specific block of IP addresses .

Malicious users are also starting to target network routers--devices that transfer data between local area networks. Unlike personal computers, routers do not benefit from security policies or monitoring technology. Routers also do not care what data they handle, only where it is going. Because routers are the linchpins of larger networks, there is real concern that future, targeted DoS attacks on such routers could disrupt the Internet by isolating whole sections. The effect of shutting down a network router would be like closing a vital freeway between two large cities during rush hour.

I found the authors' "time-to-exploit is shrinking" argument compelling. The reason attacks are happening more quickly has to do with the fact that intruder exploit tools--software that helps malicious users take advantage of computer vulnerabilities--are not as widely available on the Web as they once were. It used to be that you could find them on hacker sites without too much trouble. Also, the tools are now equipped with anti-forensics features that make reverse engineering much harder. This means it takes longer for a software vendor to create a workaround or fix when a new vulnerability is discovered.

The authors also found that malicious users are now turning to Internet Relay Chat (IRC) to help plan their DoS attacks and set up networks to carry them out. Because there are so many messages being sent over IRC, communications sent by malicious users and the machines they have infected go unnoticed. Better yet, IRC servers keep logs, so the malicious user can easily keep track of all the compromised machines in the DoS network he is creating.

I found one observation missing from the report: that the original targets of the Code Red worm didn't always suffer an outage. Rather, it was the intense Web traffic produced by these worms that caused local DoS attacks on random sites. Given the success of this scattershot approach, I think in the future malicious users might settle for widespread local DoS attacks, as opposed to targeting high-profile sites such as www.whitehouse.gov.

Government Can Nab Foreign Hackers

The Justice Department, using the recently approved antiterrorism law, can now prosecute foreign hackers when they attack computers in their own or

other countries outside the United States.

Critics said Wednesday the change could make the United States the world's Internet policeman and set a precedent that would apply American values to the worldwide network.

Prosecutions can occur if any part of a crime takes place within U.S. borders. A large part of the Internet's communications traffic goes through the United States, even in messages that travel from one foreign country to another.

The new prosecutorial powers, which have no parallel in other nations, troubled one former Justice Department computer crimes prosecutor.

''It's a massive expansion of U.S. sovereignty," said Mark Rasch, now with computer security firm, Predictive Systems.

The change was highlighted last month by the Justice Department in its field guidance to federal prosecutors.

''Individuals in foreign countries frequently route communications through the United States, even as they hack from one foreign country to another," the recommendations said. ''The amendment creates the option, where appropriate, of prosecuting such criminals in the United States."

The FBI referred questions to the Justice Department. A Justice Department spokeswoman did not return calls for comment Wednesday.

Much of the Internet's message traffic travels through the United States, dependent on American hubs in Virginia and California.

Jessica Marantz of the Internet statistics firm Telegeography said more than 80 percent of Internet access points in Asia, Africa and South America are connected through U.S. cities. Therefore, an e-mail sent between two cities in China probably will travel through the United States - putting its contents under American jurisdiction.

The Justice Department pushed for the legislation as a way to fight terrorism, and American interests overseas could be protected by the change.

But the change in law creates a precedent that could be used to prosecute any computer crime, Rasch said, from basic data theft to sending pornographic pictures. Current law already allows pornography prosecutions in any jurisdiction the pictures pass through, but this has not yet been applied on an international scale to Internet transmissions.

For example, an owner of a pornography Web site in Sweden might be prosecuted for sending a racy picture to a friend in Norway if the message happened to travel through a computer in Fairfax, Va. In that case, a U.S. prosecutor could try to extradite the sender and prosecute him for breaking Virginia law, using Virginia's standards for obscenity.

''We haven't done that yet, because it's an affront to the way the Internet works," Rasch said. ''But now (with the antiterror law) we're criminalizing anything that happens over the Internet because traffic passes through the United States."

''What it basically says is that we will impose our values on anything that happens anywhere in the world provided it passes through our borders."

FBI agents complain about the difficulty of computer crime investigations that almost always venture overseas, requiring time-consuming search warrants at every step and the cooperation of foreign governments. They also are frustrated by offshore pornography and gambling Web sites, accessed by Americans, that are legal in their own countries.

Prosecutors in the Philippines last year had to dismiss charges against a college student suspected of creating the ‘‘Love Letter" virus, which caused billions of dollars in damages worldwide, because they had no applicable law. Under the U.S. antiterror statute, the suspect could have been tried in America.

‘‘There are still a lot of countries out there without adequate (computer crime) laws," said Bruce McConnell, who is conducting a survey on international computer laws. ‘‘Extradition is slow and expensive, so I would guess it wouldn’t be used except in the worst cases."

David Sobel, general counsel of the Washington-based Electronic Privacy Information Center, said the change is particularly troubling when coupled with powers to send federal agents overseas to abduct and bring back suspects for trial.

‘‘It is a significant expansion of U.S. jurisdiction with respect to so-called cybercrimes," Sobel said. ‘‘It was enacted under the guise of counterterrorism, but it is in fact applicable to all types of crimes."

Computer crime laws are rapidly changing worldwide. Earlier this month, the 43-member Council of Europe adopted a cybercrime treaty to standardize procedures for policing on the Internet. The United States has been invited to sign the treaty but has not yet done so.

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